

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Columbia River Gorge

*National Wildlife  
Refuges*

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*Steigerwald Lake NWR*

*Franz Lake NWR*

*Pierce NWR*





*Soaring high above the volcanic ridges of the Cascades, a family of winged migrants spot a familiar resting place below.*

*Soon the weary travelers will find refuge near the shores of the Columbia River, that constant*

*force responsible for carving this impressive passage. Though human progress may ring in the distance, they are at home among the wild chorus that sings the story of these jewels of the Columbia River Gorge.*



*Crown Point as seen from  
Steigerwald Lake NWR*

©Dave Olson

## **The Constancy of Change**

The forces of nature have brought great change to the Columbia River Gorge; at times slowly through the steady flow of the river, at other times in the form of cataclysmic events like the Ice Age Floods.

People have also brought change to this area—altering the flow of water with dams and dikes, and clearing land for agriculture. This human influence created habitat loss, leading to the establishment of Steigerwald Lake, Franz Lake and Pierce National Wildlife Refuges.

Located at the crossroads of the Cascade Mountains and the Columbia River, this area is uniquely significant to wildlife. Birds from the east side of the mountains mingle with those of the west in this near sea-level passage. When the second powerhouse was constructed at Bonneville Dam, lowland habitat was lost both up and downstream. A portion of these Refuge lands were established to mitigate for this loss—creating more feeding habitat for migrating and resident wildlife.

Once, natural processes of the river provided habitat by creating and replenishing wetlands and depositing sandbars colonized by willows and cottonwoods. Due to the demands of energy and agriculture these habitats vanished. Wetlands were drained, riparian forests were cleared, dikes were constructed, and dams were built. As a result, the river no longer performs its natural processes on the Refuges.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service now protects these lands, often managing them with the same methods that depleted the original habitats to create a vibrant resource supporting a growing wildlife population.





## Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge

Teeming with wildlife at the eastern edge of Camas and Washougal, Washington, the 1,049-acre Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge presents a fantastic opportunity to connect with nature through hiking and wildlife observation.

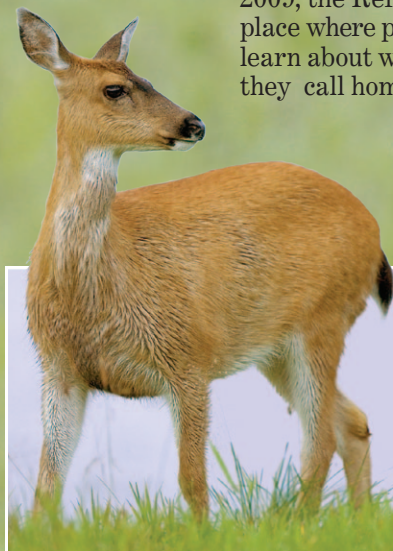
Over 200 of the 300 bird species seen in Clark County have been observed on this relatively small refuge, making Steigerwald Lake an excellent birding destination.

Habitat management is an active process at Steigerwald Lake. Refuge staff, with the support of volunteers, are actively restoring riparian plants along salmon-bearing Gibbons Creek. Other habitats of vital importance to the Refuge include seasonal wetlands, grasslands, and oak forested uplands.

The results of these management efforts can be measured in abundance. In addition to its diversity of birds, the Refuge is also home to over 20 species of mammals, 15 species of reptiles and amphibians, and a wide variety of insects, fish, and plants. With the opening of a new trail in 2009, the Refuge has also become a place where people can experience and learn about wildlife and the places they call home.



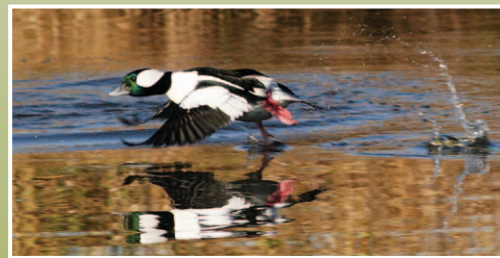
*Bewick's wren*  
©Roger Windemuth



*Signs of Black-tailed deer can be seen along the trail*



*Osprey, nesting along the Columbia, come to the Refuge in search of a meal.*  
©Roger Windemuth



*Bufflehead overwinter on the Refuge*  
©Roger Windemuth



*Coyote search the grasslands for voles*  
©Roger Windemuth



## Enjoying the Refuge

Steigerwald Lake NWR is a place where wildlife comes first. When visiting, always remember, you are a guest in their home.

## Refuge Hours

The Refuge is open from dawn to dusk throughout the year. The closing time is posted on the entrance gate.

## Environmental Education

Environmental education is an important part of ensuring the future of conservation. Educators who are interested in coming to the Refuge and connecting their students with nature are encouraged to call and learn about current opportunities.

## Gibbons Creek Wildlife Art Trail



©Dave Olson

Along this 2.75-mile wildlife art trail you'll encounter a variety of habitats and wildlife viewpoints. As you walk, look closer—natural and man-made art is waiting to be discovered. The trail is open year-round, with a seasonal spur closed from October 1 through April 30 to provide sanctuary for wintering waterfowl. The rest of Steigerwald Lake NWR is closed to the public. Please stay on the trail.

*Look for dowitchers, heads bobbing like sewing machine needles, as they probe for food*  
©Roger Windemuth



## Accessibility

Visitor service facilities, including trails and overlooks, have been designed to accommodate visitors needing special assistance. Please contact Refuge staff if you would like further information.

## Walking Only

Trails are for walking only. To minimize disturbance to wildlife, no biking, jogging, or running is allowed.

## Pets

Pets are not allowed. They disturb wildlife and will scare animals away before you and others get a chance to see them.



*Long-tailed weasel*  
©Roger Windemuth

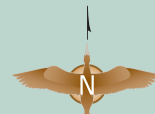
## Collecting

Please leave plants and animals for all to enjoy. Collecting of any kind is not allowed. Do not pick up wildlife. While it may appear that a young animal has been abandoned, chances are its parent is watching anxiously nearby.

## Prohibited Activities

No fires, fireworks, fishing, or hunting. Camping or overnight parking is not permitted.

# Refuge Map



## Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge

- **Refuge Boundary**
- **Gibbons Creek Art Trail**  
*Open Year-Round*
- **Seasonal Spur**  
*Closed Oct 1-April 30 to protect wildlife*
- **Columbia River Dike Trail**  
*Bikes, horseback riding, jogging, and dogs on leash allowed.*



Trailhead



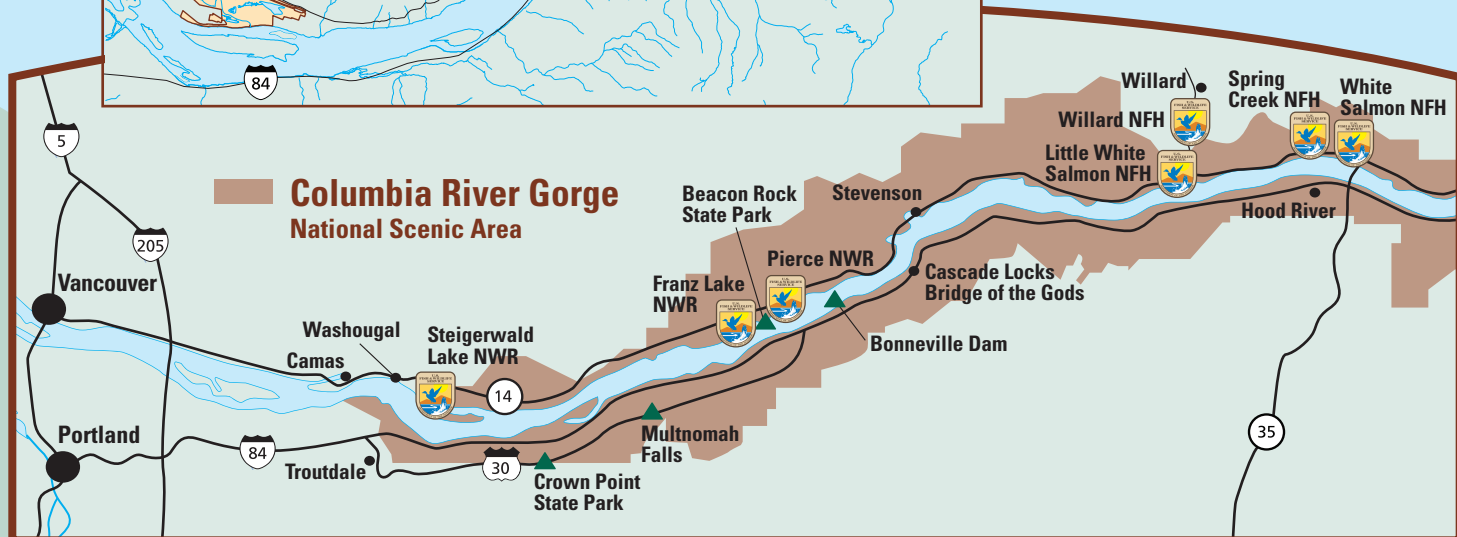
Restrooms



Parking



## Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area





**Franz Lake  
National Wildlife  
Refuge**

Located near the hamlet of Skamania, Washington, about 15 miles upstream from Steigerwald Lake, this 552-acre refuge contains one of the few remaining natural wetlands still connected to the Columbia River. Although not open to the public, this sanctuary for wildlife can be viewed from an overlook along SR 14.

Created in 1990, the Franz and adjacent Arthur Lakes contain healthy stands of wapato, an important winter food for migrating tundra swans. Other wintering waterfowl that rely on the lakes include lesser scaup, canvasbacks, and ring-necked ducks. The Refuge also provides homes for a variety of other wildlife including species such as rails, band-tailed pigeons, red-tailed hawks, bobcat, and black bear.

There's more to Franz Lake NWR than open water. Wetlands, riparian forests, old-growth cedar, fir stands, and open meadows also provide vital habitat for wildlife.

*Wapato  
reveals its  
flower in  
midsummer.*  
©Carla Finley

*Disappearing fall colors signal the  
arrival of tundra swans at Franz Lake*  
©Dave Miller



*Ring-necked duck*  
©Matt Knoth



## Pierce National Wildlife Refuge

Pierce NWR is located just upstream the from Franz Lake NWR, between the town of North Bonneville and Beacon Rock State Park.

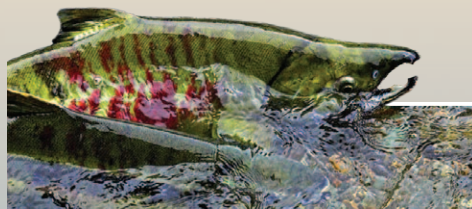


*Pierce Lake*  
©Dave Miller

From 1955 to 1988 the cattle pastures of Pierce Ranch attracted scores of wintering geese. Endeared to the geese that took refuge on her ranch, Mrs. Lena Pierce took action to conserve the land and its wildlife. In 1993, she donated the ranch to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Through this generous act the area became a 329-acre National Wildlife Refuge managed in perpetuity as an inviolate

sanctuary for migratory birds. Today, grassland and wetland habitats support a diversity of wintering waterfowl. Managed for a mosaic of habitat types, this small landscape is biologically rich, supporting several rare and imperiled species of plants and animals.

Although this refuge is also closed to the public, spring and fall guided tours are offered. Please call for details.

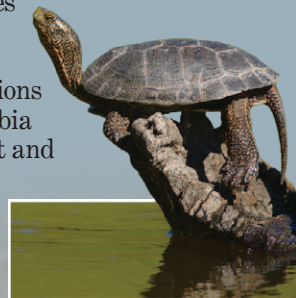


*Chum salmon*  
©Austin Baker

Historically, Columbia River chum salmon harvests exceeded eight million pounds annually. Today, the spawning beds

at Pierce NWR represent one of the few remaining chum runs in the river. These salmon prefer the cool, clean, well-oxygenated water for spawning found in the slow-moving, spring-fed Hardy Creek at Pierce NWR.

Since 2000, Refuge staff have worked with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to establish a breeding population of 200 western pond turtles, a state-endangered species. The turtles have been found breeding in only three other locations along the Columbia River. Its habitat and protected status made the Refuge an ideal location to introduce another breeding population.



*Western pond turtle*  
©Yathin

*Canada geese find ample winter food at Pierce NWR*  
©Roger Windemuth





## A Year of Wildlife

Discover an ever changing panorama of wildlife. As the seasons change, so does wildlife viewing. Located on the Pacific Flyway, these Refuges are an important stopover where migratory waterfowl and songbirds stop to rest, refuel, and raise their young.

### Spring



*Bullock's oriole*  
©Roger Windemuth

This is the time to enjoy the bright colors and singing chorus of migratory songbirds. Many species of songbirds such as the Bullock's oriole arrive and use the Refuges as a place to breed and nest. At the same time, wetland species such as the American bittern and Virginia rail are common but difficult to spot. Northern harriers are frequently seen flying low over wetland vegetation looking for dinner.

### Summer

As migration slows, wildlife focus on raising their young. Broods of mallards and Canada geese are commonly seen in the wetlands. Plants like smartweed grow and become the perfect food for migrating waterfowl that arrive later in the year. Red-winged blackbirds are often seen in the wetlands scattered throughout the Refuges.

### Fall

As rain rolls in and temperatures cool, Arctic-nesting birds begin to arrive from their northern breeding grounds. In search of open water, food, and shelter, waterfowl fulfill their needs on the Refuges. This is also when Canada geese arrive and can be seen moving between wetland areas.



*Great blue heron*  
©Roger Windemuth

### Winter

The calm waters of Steigerwald Lake NWR attract large rafts of diving ducks, including scaup and ring-necked ducks, as they seek refuge from the turbulent Columbia River. The cackling of up to 2,000 geese can be heard, creating an uproar as they move from one field to another. You may get lucky and spot a few snow geese or greater white-fronted geese among them.



*Northern pintail  
eat seeds and aquatic  
insects as they rest and  
refuel on the Refuges*



### **Wildlife Viewing Tips**

The patient observer will be rewarded with many wildlife viewing opportunities. Every season brings a new wealth of discoveries. Use the following tips to observe and enjoy the varied wildlife found here.

### **Use Binoculars**

Binoculars and spotting scopes allow you an up close look that does not affect wildlife behavior.

### **Come Early, Stay Late**

Early morning and dusk are the best times of the day to view wildlife. Note that the Refuge is open from dawn to dusk. Closing time is posted on the entrance gate. Please plan your visit to leave before the gate closes.

### **Use Identification Guides**

Field guides are helpful in identifying species of plants and animals. A wildlife list is available at the Steigerwald Lake NWR trailhead kiosk and online.

### **Be Patient and Respectful**

Move slowly. Quick movements and loud noises will frighten most wildlife away. Try sitting quietly in one location. Animals that have hidden may reappear after a short while. Walk quietly and teach children quiet observation. Other visitors will appreciate your consideration.

*Pacific chorus frogs can change color quickly to blend in with their surroundings*

©Matt How



### **Use All of Your Senses**



*Tree snags are a good place to look for wildlife signs*

©Dave Olson

### **Volunteer**

Be aware of sounds and smells. Often you will hear more than you will see. Look for animal signs. Tracks, scat, feathers, and chewed plants left behind often tell interesting stories. Remember to leave these discoveries where you find them. Please be considerate. For the protection of wildlife, visitors must stay on the trail. No off trail use. Observe from the sidelines and do not approach wildlife too closely. Don't offer snacks; your lunch could disrupt wild digestive systems.



*Pileated woodpecker*  
©Roger Windemuth

Do you want to help restore and maintain native habitats, greet visitors, take wildlife and habitat photographs, or work with school groups? If you are interested in volunteering or want to learn more about the Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards, a Refuge Friends group, call the Refuge or go to [www.RefugeStewards.org](http://www.RefugeStewards.org).



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National Wildlife Refuges  
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**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
<http://www.fws.gov>**

**For Refuge Information  
1 800/344 WILD  
<http://www.fws.gov/ridgefieldrefuges>**

**Washington State Relay  
TTY 1 800/833-6388  
Voice 1 800/833-6384  
Telebraille 1 800/833-6385**

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*Cover Photo:*  
*American bittern*  
©Craig Strand Photography

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